SAALT AND ASHA KIRAN STATEMENT ON MISTRIAL IN INDIAN GRANDFATHER CASE

SAALT is outraged that a second mistrial was declared on November 4, 2015 after a deadlocked jury once again failed to convict Madison, AL police officer, Eric Parker, on a civil rights charge brought against him by the U.S. Department of Justice earlier this year. Parker was captured on video beating Indian grandfather, Sureshbhai Patel, to the point of partial paralysis in February after Patel, initially identified by a neighbor as a "suspicious Black man," repeatedly told the officer he could not speak English. The U.S. Department of Justice re-tried the case after the first mistrial was declared in September.

“While the trial was supposed to focus on the unreasonable use of force that Parker used on Patel, it was Patel’s immigration status and English proficiency skills that were really on trial,” said Lakshmi Sridaran, Director of National Policy and Advocacy at SAALT. Indeed, in his opening remarks, Parker’s attorney said: "When you come to the U.S. we expect you to follow our laws and speak our language. Mr. Patel bears as much responsibility for this as anyone."

“We continue to believe in the strength of the evidence and that the defendant’s actions violated the Constitutional rights of the plaintiff,” said Bhavani Kakani, President of AshaKiran.

As we see time again with police brutality cases in this country, particularly with Black victims, the message of this case is loud and clear: that police brutality rarely warrants punishment. Dante Barry, Executive Director of Million Hoodies United, noted: "It is absolutely devastating to hear the news from Alabama as it reflects a deep pattern of unfairness for people of color. Although grounded in anti-blackness, police brutality by law enforcement and immigration enforcement is no stranger to South Asian communities and it is indicative of this political moment to be on the path to justice."

SAALT encourages South Asian Americans to be vigilant and engaged in the efforts of the movement for Black lives to draw attention to the ways in which Black communities in particular, as well as other communities of color, are facing state violence. “The case of Mr. Patel provides an opportunity for South Asians to become active participants in the demands of the movement for Black lives,” said Suman Raghunathan, Executive Director of SAALT.